Pilot Use of Student Comments in Personnel Processes

2017-2018 Academic Year

In 2017-2018, use of Student Rating of Teaching (SRT) student comments in personnel processes is limited to the annual Accomplishments and Planning process. The time period covered by this process is calendar year 2017, including spring, summer, and fall semesters. The pilot applies to term, tenure-track, tenured, and P&A teaching faculty.

The framework laid out below has been modified from the recommendations of the Student Comments Workgroup to:

- Delete references to use of student comments in the 2017-2018 promotion and tenure process,
- Increase the size of the review committee from "at least one faculty member" to "two faculty members" from each academic department.

Further, Section 3 has been substantially revised in light of the departmental processes for the review of potentially unfairly prejudicial comments.

Pilot Framework

1. In order for student comments to be considered "one among many metrics to assess instructional effectiveness" (Wood, Wood, January 14, 2016 charge to Student Comments Workgroup), faculty are strongly encouraged to include one or more of the following in their annual Accomplishments and Planning report:
   a. Narrative context for the interpretation of SRT quantitative and qualitative data (e.g., teaching a course for the first time, experimenting with new teaching method for a familiar course, level of course, required or elective course).
   b. Report from recent peer observation of teaching. Department heads will assist faculty in identifying an appropriate peer reviewer.
   c. Narrative reflection regarding their instructional effectiveness and their plans to continuously improve teaching and learning.

   All faculty are encouraged to use the standard SRT template provided by the Provost's Office for display of quantitative data.

2. In order for student comments and other data to be "used as part of a formative review consistent with our continuous improvement effort" (Wood, January 14, 2016 charge to Student Comments Workgroup), department heads should:
   a. As part of verbal and written feedback, summarize their understanding of the context within which they are reviewing faculty member's teaching effectiveness,
   b. Review all SRT data for all courses taught within the evaluation period,
   c. Reflect on patterns observed in student comments, rather than focus on individual comments. Because patterns within student comments should be the focus, no verbatim quotes may be inserted into the annual Planning and Accomplishment process evaluation forms,

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    d. Balance the verbal and written feedback to acknowledge both teaching strengths and opportunities for improvement, and

    e. Provide specific advice regarding how to address opportunities for improvement (e.g., methods to increase SRT response rates, training to attend, and colleagues to consult).

3. In order to ensure that unfairly prejudicial comments are not considered in personnel evaluations:

    a. Department heads will have direct access only to SRT quantitative data.

    b. Departmental administrative assistants may have direct access to SRT quantitative and qualitative data. They will not share the qualitative data with department heads.

    c. In each department, faculty will develop, approve, and document in writing a process for individual faculty members to:

        i. Identify comments that they believe may be unfairly prejudicial,

        ii. Consult with the department head and/or senior faculty member, providing faculty members with reasonable choice in the selection of the person with whom they consult,

        iii. Determine whether a comment is unfairly prejudicial, and

        iv. Redact comments that have been determined by the consultative process to be unfairly prejudicial. Note: redaction cannot be done at the system level.

        v. Ensure that no redacted comments are made available to department heads.

        vi. The process must provide an option for faculty members to appeal a determination that a comment is not unfairly prejudicial.

        vii. The process may include an option for administrative assistants to verify that SRT reports provided for personnel evaluations have not been altered outside of the approved process.

    d. Consistent with the Evaluation of Teaching Policy (section B6), and in recognition of different department needs and cultures, the departmental processes may vary across campus.

Review of Process

The use of student comments in personnel decisions will be reviewed for opportunities improvement after completion of the 2017-2018 annual performance review processes. A committee of two faculty members from each academic department and a mix of term, tenured, tenure-track, and P&A teaching faculty will be convened for the review. The Vice Chancellor will ensure that the review process is robust, respects academic freedom, and recognizes the value of shared governance.